



## James and Bethany's Tanzania diary

Young Global Education Campaigners of the Year, James and Bethany from Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes went on a fact finding mission to Tanzania in March 2009. This is their diary.

***The Big Question Is... Will every child receive a quality education in Tanzania by 2015?***

### **Day 1: Meetings in Dar es Salaam**

On our first full day in Tanzania we visited the Ministry for Education. We asked about Tanzania's progress on meeting targets set by world leaders (the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All principals). We were very happy to receive some encouraging and optimistic interpretations stating that Tanzania was making excellent progress and an improvement to the education.

When asked about hunger preventing children from going to school, the Permanent Secretary for Education told us that that issue was not present in Tanzania, which led to us showing a video of Zainabu (you can see this video in *Spotlight on Tanzania*) who was experiencing problems with hunger. Later on in the day we went to an organisation called TENMET, who are part of the Global Campaign for Education. We met four Tanzanian students (two girls and two boys) and had an introduction from the main speaker there who explained all about TENMET, followed by some brilliant presentations from the students about their role in campaigning for education in Tanzania.

We found we had a lot in common with the young campaigners in Tanzania, but we are fighting different battles: we are campaigning for the right to education in all countries whereas they are triggering changes within their own schools and country.

We found that TENMET did not have such a positive view of education as the government did. When asked if Tanzania will meet its goals, the response was one of doubt.

Still, we are not discouraged; even if there is a long way to go. We shall see in Arusha exactly what needs to be done and how the UK can fit into the solution.

### **Day 2: Visiting a Tanzanian school**

We were about to experience first hand the issues of education in Tanzania through those who are actually affected; we were going to visit the Makuyuni Primary School, where students ranged from six years to 14. As soon as we stepped out of our van we were in another world – one of poverty, but also prominently of unbelievable excitement! The students there had never met people such as ourselves and they hesitantly came to greet us by shaking our hands, and after that they all wanted to meet us.

We began our routine with a maths lesson, taught by the only maths teacher in the school of 1010: the head teacher, Samuel Sarakikya. He made the lesson (on Pythagoras' theorem) engaging and when he posed questions the class answered in perfect, unrehearsed unison. The moment the teacher left, the pupils instantly rushed over, primarily in their eagerness to show us how good their maths was.



When I first got into the school I noticed that there weren't many classrooms and they were clearly very small. But then I saw outside the classrooms that most of the windows were broken which I think could be a safety hazard and the school obviously couldn't pay to replace them. Inside the classroom the children were all sitting down, but when they stood up I could clearly see there must have been around 70 students in this classroom and not enough seats with desks because they were having to double up on seating, which mustn't be comfortable and hard to concentrate. It didn't look very clean either because the walls and floors were not very clean. Despite all of these distractions, the students still tried their best to stay in focus because they understand how important it is to complete their education as best as they can.

We attended a meeting with the school management committee where we received some very positive information from a mixture of teachers and tribal leaders. Girls did better than boys in terms of attendance, punctuality and results!.Some of the more negative things were that food needs to be better prepared and many students are having difficulties getting to the school. In addition we were told that the money from governments was inconsistent and meant that the school was suffering financially. We used an interpreter to talk to a PSHE club of around 60 students in one room. They told us that it is difficult walking to school because of wild animals and the lack of energy – over half of the students had not had breakfast that morning and for many a small school meal, which had only recently been introduced and was funded by charities (not the government), was the only meal that they got. They also told us that they wanted more desks and more books. It is always solemn to hear that Tanzanian students want the same things that we use everyday without consideration for their necessity.

Role models such as the ones we found here are extreme inspirations to them because it truly gives them something to aim for in life, and shows them what staying in school can really do for them. The first role model was a teacher at another school and was Masai (part of a widespread culture based on tribal communities). She had had to run away from home to have her chance in education because her parents disagreed and said that a girl wouldn't need an education. She was very successful and then after that her parents accepted her back again. The other role model was a student at a nearby college and was doing an ICT A-level course. She is still having problems with her father accepting her right to an education.

At lunchtime there was a lot of playing going on, especially with a football which we provided and this activity turned into a mass of about 100 students rampaging towards a ball at one time. And then, another ball was released and a large group of students began playing catch but then after a while people started kicking the ball and this turned into another massive match of football which was clearly the favourite sport!

We think these children really do suffer but it is so incredibly amazing how these students still stay so fantastically enthusiastic about being at a school that you really can't call a learning environment for them. There may have been improvements, according to some, but the school needs some drastic changes, as do schools all over the world, so when we get more people into school they have the chance of having a well deserved education, that has quality to make a difference to their lives.



### Day 3 – Spending time with girls in their homes

On the third day the group was split up so that we could do two interviews each conducted by one of us.

Zainabu's home was not far from the school. Firstly, we started off playing some games; marbles, juggling and skipping which we think made Zainabu very happy as it was a break from her usual hard day. Then we did some chores including washing up and sweeping the compound which was quite back-breaking and the water we did the washing in was very dirty, it didn't look very safe which must quite concerning because we know that if she got ill and couldn't go to school anymore it would be very horrible for as she has only just recently been able to get to school on a regular basis.

Then, she showed me inside her home which was around the size of three meters squared with only a bed and a mosquito net of which we assume must be shared by her, her mother, little sister and baby sibling which must be very hard to sleep with at night. And, if she can't sleep at night then it will be even more trouble for her energy levels for school. After those activities we did an interview with her and asked her three questions. Q- Do you like school and if so why? A- Yes I do because it will help me to go further in life and have a better one. Q- What is difficult about getting to school? A- I do not usually have breakfast in the mornings so I find it hard to have the energy to walk to school. Q- What career would you like when you leave school? A- I would like to work in an organisation like Maarifa [a charitable education project in the North of Tanzania] and help others have an education. Nastura is a girl who lives close by. Usually I would begin by saying how old she is but she is an orphan. She lives with her grandmother who doesn't know when her birthday is. In addition we cannot tell you what her home is like because the roof has been damaged by rain and so she has been forced to live with her uncle.

Despite these profound difficulties she attends school, but not always. Her grandmother is dying from an unknown disorder and so she has to miss school in order to look after her and help her to provide for the family by trading a local drink on the market. When she does go to school she is physically bullied because of the sexist attitudes portrayed by her class mates. She is often exhausted by the time she gets to school because of walking there, as well as to and from water holes. She also does intensive chores such as sweeping before she can attend school and so she arrives late and then falls asleep in class. She wants to be a nurse so that she can cure people but without the time to study she will not pass her exams and have to stay home.

We went with her to the watering hole to collect washing water. We would have gone with her to the water pump but it was dry: she had no source of drinking water that day. She carries a heavy bucket on her head for 20 minutes each way in the blinding and scorching sun so that she can go home and wash the family's utensils. We helped her and carried a separate bucket for that distance and after doing so it is not difficult to see why Tanzanian's are so strong and athletic after having to do that every day. We used the dirty water and a small amount of soap to wash the dishes.



We next visited a Masai community, where the people there live off of the land, consuming only natural resources. However, this would prove to be difficult because drought means that vegetation is scarce. The community met us in full dress and greeted us warmly, showing us their cultural way of living. However in some ways this uniquely independent culture is a significant hindrance because Sofia, a girl there, had never been to school. She was 14 but already engaged. Her father didn't see the point in allowing her to go to school because she was already planned to be married so what was the point in sending her to school? Nobody could question him because he was the leader of their dominion. But she wanted to go to school desperately, so that she could learn and get a job. The only things that she learnt in the Masai community were skills like farming and cooking, nothing that would enable her to better herself.

**And finally, we had much to think about on the long flight back to the UK about all we had heard and seen in Tanzania...**

The government there is insistent that there has been vast improvement in the number of students in Tanzania as a result of stopping school fees in 2002. However, TENMET, the organisation that runs the Global Campaign for Education in Tanzania believes that the Education for All promises will not be fulfilled by 2015. On a local level, we have experienced an individual case study: the Makuyuni Primary School. They are improving at a slow rate. They are reaching out to communities in order to improve the enrolment of girls, introducing a complimentary school meal and building up their school so that they have new facilities for teachers and students. However, there are still girls not in school, the meals are too little and of too poor quality to be useful and the buildings that they do have are small and dilapidated.

Poverty is a major issue in Tanzania. We have seen first hand that when a young girl wakes up she doesn't know whether she will have drinking water or not. The journey that some people have to make in order to obtain the simple necessities such as water is very tiring and means that pupils are late to school and when they arrive they are so tired that they cannot stay awake. Some children will have to work or trade in order to provide for their family and some will have sick parents or siblings to take care of. Every day they have to spend time and energy doing the chores around the house such as caring for livestock, washing dishes and sweeping their home and yard.

The UK government is giving money to Tanzania but because of the weakness of the pound, in comparison to other countries, even if we give the same amount it is worth less. The UK needs to follow up on exactly where the money is going to ensure that money is well spent on the important things, so that the Tanzanian education system gets the money into the right places to benefit all the children.

Tanzania has made significant progress in terms of education, but it is not as close to meeting international standards as we had hoped it was. Gender equality in particular is improving, but still lacking in some regions and many feel that Tanzania will not meet the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All targets. However, the important thing is not about governmental statistics, but education for those who are unfairly disadvantaged and what opportunities we can provide them so that they can have a secure future.

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**75 million children are missing out on an education**